

REMARKS

The Final Office Action mailed February 11, 2008 has been carefully considered.

Reconsideration in view of the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Claim Status and Amendment of the Claims

Claims 1 and 3-18 are currently pending.

The Applicants are grateful for the indication of allowability of claims 2-18, subject to their re-writing in independent form. With this Amendment, Claim 1 has been amended to include the limitations of dependent claim 2, and Claim 2 has been cancelled. Presently unamended claims 3-18 depend from amended claim 1. Support for these changes may be found in the Specification, Figures, and claims as originally filed.

With this Amendment it is respectfully submitted the claims satisfy the statutory requirements.

The First 35 U.S.C. § 102 Rejection

Claim 1 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by Cloutier.^{1 2} With this Amendment, Claim 1 has been amended to include the limitations of Claim 2. As the Examiner has indicated Claim 1 as presently amended would be allowable,³ the Applicants respectfully submit the rejection of Claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) is now moot.

¹ U.S. Patent No. 5,892,962 to Cloutier.

² Office Action mailed February 11, 2008, at ¶ 2.

Dependent Claims 3-18

Claims 3-18 depend from Claim 1 as presently amended. Claim 1 being allowable, Claims 3-18 must also be allowable.

Request for Entry of Amendment

Entry of this Amendment will place the Application in better condition for allowance, or at the least, narrow any issues for an appeal. Accordingly, entry of this Amendment is appropriate and is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

It is believed that this Amendment places the above-identified patent application into condition for allowance. Early favorable consideration of this Amendment is earnestly solicited.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner is thanked for the finding of allowable subject matter in Claims 2-18 if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. With this Amendment, Claim 1 has been amended to include the limitations of dependent claim 2, Claims 3-18 depend therefrom, and Claim 2 has been cancelled. The Applicants acknowledge the Examiner's statement of reasons for allowance as set forth in the Office Action. However, Applicants point out that the reasons for allowability of the above referenced claims are not limited to the reasons for allowance as set forth in the Office Action, and that additional reasons for allowability may exist, each of which may be independently sufficient to establish the patentability of one or more pending claims.

³ Office Action at ¶ 3.

The Applicants respectfully reserve the right to introduce, articulate, or otherwise comment on any such additional reasons for allowance as may be appropriate in any future proceedings concerning the claimed invention.

If, in the opinion of the Examiner, an interview would expedite the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned attorney at the number indicated below.

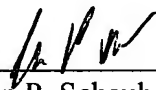
The Applicant respectfully requests that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case.

Please charge any additional required fee or credit any overpayment not otherwise paid or credited to our deposit account No. 50-1698.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: April 11, 2008



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